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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Friday, April 21, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MUSHROOM SUGGESTIONS" Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today my suggestions are for anyone and everyone who likes mushrooms. I'm passing on to you some tips for buying mushrooms--and some mushroom cooking hints from the Federal Bureau of Home Economics.

But first, here's an item that might interest you--about the growing of mushrooms commercially in the United States.

"It has been less than half a century since mushrooms were first cultivated commercially in the United States. But since that time, growing them has expanded into a sizeable industry. Today, according to trade estimates, about twice as many mushrooms are produced annually as there were ten years ago.

"The big mushroom center of the United States is in and around Chester county in eastern Pennsylvania. This area--which also includes part of northern Delaware--produces the majority of the mushrooms in this country. But other growing centers are located near practically all of our large cities."

So--with mushroom production booming right along you may want to review some of the things to watch for when you buy them at the store.

"Ordinarily where fresh mushrooms are sold they are available from fall to early summer. They're sold by weight--usually by bulk or in 1 or 3 pound packages. Of course, some of the mushroom crop always goes into cans and is available at any time of the year.

"To buy fresh mushrooms intelligently, it's not necessary to have an extensive knowledge of mushroom varieties. For most markets sell only one variety-- a

white mushroom. However, on a few markets a more strongly flavored brown mushroom is sold.

"The main indicator of mushroom quality is freshness. Mushrooms are more perishable and dry out more quickly than most vegetables. But freshness in mushrooms shows up as it does in other vegetables--in a surface appearance that is not dried out and has no discoloration caused by age.

"Mushrooms that command the highest price on the market are in the closed stage. That is, the protective "veil" that joins the cap to the stem has not been broken. This break takes place as the mushroom matures. It exposes the gills on the under side of the cap. Mushrooms that have "open caps" are not so attractive to look at. But they make good eating if they haven't deteriorated otherwise.

"Naturally the best mushrooms to buy will not have spots or damaged places that extend deeply into the cap. And stems longer than 1-1/4 inches are undesirable, though all stems can be used in certain dishes.

"Size makes no difference in the quality of a mushroom. But as a matter of convenience in cooking it's a good idea to have them uniformly large, medium, or small."

And--speaking of cooking--here's the main thing to remember according to cooks who know how to develop every bit of that special distinctive mushroom flavor. They say "use low heat and do not cook overlong". High temperatures and overcooking cause mushrooms to shrivel and become tough. Also, use little water, because mushrooms are largely made up of water.

"To prepare mushrooms for cooking, wash them well just before they are needed. Some cooks like to remove the skin from the cap of the mushroom, but this is not necessary if it's tender.

"Creamed mushrooms have a better flavor if they are floured, then browned delicately before before the cream or rich milk is added to make the sauce. There'll

be more surface to brown if the mushrooms are sliced lengthwise--from cap to stem. For soups, they may be cut up in smaller pieces to brown.

"Steak with mushrooms is a dish that always brings up happy taste memories. The mushrooms may be made into a sauce--by cooking them in butter or drippings from the steak. Or large mushrooms may be broiled on a grill along with the steak.

"These broiled mushrooms also make interesting tidbits for party refreshments. Or for a more filling dish at the main course of a meal, serve them on buttered toast.

"To broil, place the caps, gill side down, under the flame of the broiling oven for two or three minutes. Turn, sprinkle salt and pepper over the gill side. Place a small piece of butter in each cap. Broil under the flame for a few minutes longer. Lift them carefully from the broiler in order not to lose the juice."

If you're wondering why I've gone this long without mentioning the food value of the mushroom--here's a bit of information on that.

"Concerning the nutritive value of the mushroom--food specialists give it no gold stars in this column. Justification for eating it must come from its other contributions--it's special flavor--delicate texture--the distinction it gives to the dishes to which it is added.

"Mushrooms are not a substitute for meat, nutritionists point out. For although they do contain some nitrogen, this is mainly not in the form of protein."

And that pretty well rounds out my suggestions on mushrooms for today.

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